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A
S E R M O N

Preached before the

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Incorporated SOCIETY

FOR THE

*Propagation of the Gospel in
Foreign Parts;*

AT THEIR

ANNIVERSARY MEETING

IN THE

Parish-Church of St Mary-le-Bow,

On Friday the 21st of February, 1728.

By the Right Reverend Father in GOD,

HENRY, Lord Bishop of Hereford.

L O N D O N,

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February 21. 1728-9.

*At the Anniversary Meeting of the Society
for the Propagation of the Gospel in
Foreign Parts.*

A Greed, That the Thanks of the
SOCIETY be given to the
Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of
Hereford, for his Sermon Preached
this Day before the SOCIETY, and
that his Lordship be desir'd to Print
the same.

David Humphreys, Secretary.



Daniel xii. Verse 3.

They that be wise, shall shine as the Brightness of the Firmament; and they that turn many to Righteousness, as the Stars for ever and ever.



OUR great Prophet, being about to finish and seal up his Predictions, is here suppos'd, by the best Expositors, to have his Thoughts directed to the last Days, or latest Ages, term'd by St. Paul (Gal. iv. 4.) *the Fulness of the Time*, which was to begin at the Expiration of

the Jewish State; or with the first Coming of the Messiah at his Humiliation in the Flesh, and to be concluded at his second Coming in great Glory to Judge the World; When all Mankind shall receive the just Recompence of their past Actions, and *Many*, or all, of *them that sleep in the Dust of the Earth shall awake*, or be raised from their Graves, *some to everlasting Life, and some to Shame and everlasting Contempt*, as it is set forth in the second verse; and as it immediately follows in my Text, *They that be wise*, or who are eminently good and religious, who are *wise*, not only unto their own, but other Men's *Salvation*, and so become the blessed Instruments of advancing God's Spiritual Kingdom here upon Earth, by *Converting Sinners from the Error of their Ways, and turning them to Righteousness*, shall be eminently rewarded, or most highly exalted in his Hea-

for the Propagation of the Gospel. 5

Heavenly Kingdom ; *When they that be Wise, shall shine as the Brightness of the Firmament ; and they that turn many to Righteousness, as the Stars for ever and ever.*

FROM which Words I shall,

FIRST, Shew, in general, the great Charity of converting Sinners, or, *turning them to Righteousness.* Which I shall further recommend,

SECONDLY, In the special Instance now before us, of converting Infidels: And,

THIRDLY, Consider the glorious Reward which is here promis'd to those who join in so charitable a Work ; *They shall shine as the Brightness of the Firmament, and as the Stars for ever and ever.*

FIRST,

FIRST, I am to shew the great Charity of converting Sinners, or, turning them to Righteousness.

By Charity, as it relates to our Fellow-Creatures, and stands distinguished from the Love of GOD, which is the other Branch of this Christian Grace, is always understood the Love of our Neighbour, exerting it self, upon all Occasions, in the kindest Offices of Humanity and Beneficence toward all, whom, in any Respect, we are capable of profiting.

WITH REGARD to their Bodies, or their present Estate in this World, it is exercised in administering all the Relief we are able to give to the Miseries and Calamities to which they are exposed; in being Feet to the Lamé, and Eyes to the Blind; in Feeding the Hungry, Cloathing the Naked, and helping the Oppressed; and, to be short, in carefully supplying all

all their respective Wants whatsoever, according to our Power or Ability of doing it. And with Regard to their Souls, or their future Estate, which is the great Charity I am now speaking to, it consults likewise their spiritual Welfare of all Kinds; it is Wisdom to the Simple, and Instruction to the Ignorant; it revives the Contrite, and reproofs the Impenitent; and never neglects any Opportunities, that come in its Way, of bringing them to a Sense of their dangerous Condition, and reclaiming them from it.

To these Acts of Charity, of both Kinds, as we are bless'd with the Opportunity and Ability of performing them, we are doubtless obliged to apply our selves. But as it is said of this Christian Grace, that it excels all others, it must likewise be allow'd that our Charity in *saving the Souls* of our Brethren, or
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in securing and promoting their eternal Welfare, is far superiour to that which is employ'd in relieving their Bodies ; and as much exceeds it, as the everlasting Happiness of the other World surpasses the transitory Enjoyments of this. This therefore, with Respect to our Neighbour as well as our selves, is that *better Part*, which we should never suffer, upon any Account, to be *taken from us* ; and, comparatively speaking, it is the *one Thing* that is most truly *needful*, for them.

ST. James recommends this Duty, in his *vth* Ch. 19, and 20th Verses, in a Manner that deserves our particular Regard : Brethren, says he, *if any of you do err from the Truth, and one convert him ; let him know, or be well assured, that he which converteth a Sinner from the Error of his Way, shall save a Soul from Death ;* which he plainly suggests to be the best Office he can do for him ;
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and then adds, how much it will redound to his own Benefit, and he shall hide a Multitude of Sins, i. e. as some interpret these Words, of his own Sins, by disposing the Almighty to be the more propitious, upon his sincere Repentance, in the Forgiveness of them; or, as it is in 2 Sam. xxii. 26. to shew himself merciful with him, who has been thus merciful to his sinful Brother.

OUR Blessed Lord, we know, whilst he liv'd and convers'd, as he chiefly delighted to do with the Infirm and Diseas'd, and Indigent Part of Mankind, was never wanting to these miserable Creatures, in any Office of Pity and Compassion that their Case requir'd; and having, many Times, no other Way of helping and relieving them, he did it by his Miracles; he bless'd and multiply'd the scanty Provision that had been made for himself and his usual Attendants, into more than

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was sufficient to satisfy the Hunger of some Thousands; he made the Lame to walk, the Blind to see, and the Deaf to hear; he cleans'd the Lepers, heal'd the Sick, and rais'd the Dead, by speaking, as the Centurion desir'd he would do in his particular Case, the Word only; as he at first created the World, by saying, *Let it be so.*

BUT the principal End for which he wrought these and all his Miracles, was to save Sinners, to call them to Repentance, to demonstrate his Power of forgiving their Sins, and to deliver them from the Dominion and Punishment of them. And, as for this End he assum'd our Nature, and came into the World, so when he had fulfill'd all Righteousness, he then also laid down his Life, as he had taken it up, with the utmost Resignation, to save Sinners. And greater Love hath no Man than this, nor can any pretend to come up to it; yet the Inference St. Paul draws

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draws from the infinite Condescension of GOD's Love to us, is no other than this, that, as he lov'd us, so we ought also, in an humble Imitation and a grateful Acknowledgment of the Divine Goodness, to love one another; to do all the Good we can in the World, and to promote and set forward, to the utmost of our Power, the common Salvation of Mankind in general. Which leads me to consider,

SECONDLY, The special Instance of Christian Charity, now before us, that of converting Infidels: Who are emphatically styl'd by St. Paul, Gal. ii. 15. *Sinners of the Gentiles*; and whose unhappy Circumstances, in those Parts where our Traffick invites us, shews them to be, in Regard to their spiritual Interest, the most proper Objects of our Christian Charity, and loudly calls for our Compassion towards them; their Condition being plainly such

as cannot be remedy'd without the merciful Assistance of those who have embrac'd the Christian Faith, and are providentially call'd, as we are by our Dealings with them, to instruct them in it. For, as the Apostle argues, Rom. x. 14, and 15. *How shall they call upon him, or upon his Name whereby alone they can hope to be sav'd, of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a Preacher? and how shall they Preach, who will presume to undertake the Employment, or engage in so difficult and hazardous a Work, unless they be sent, or duly authoriz'd and call'd to it? Who indeed, without the Help and Assistance, which must flow from the charitable Contributions of those who promote this great Design, together with G O D's Blessing attending it, can be thought sufficient for these Things?*

How beautiful therefore, as the Apostle goes on at the latter Part
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of the 15th Verse, and as it is written, Isa. lii. 7. *are the Feet of them that Preach to these People the Gospel of Peace, and bring them glad Tidings of good Things, and that publish Salvation!* or who employ their kind and most Christian Endeavours to gain them to the Faith of Jesus Christ. How much to be commended are their pious Undertakings, and how well do they deserve the best Encouragements we are able to give them!

As we are therefore engag'd in Commerce with these People, and have our Settlements amongst them, and by these Advantages have many Opportunities of instructing them in the Principles of our holy Religion, and recommending it to them by our good Examples; we ought not to neglect any of the Means that are put into our Hands, of bringing them over to the Practice of it. And I cannot but think it a just Debt, with which
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we are oblig'd to charge our selves, to do this for them, were it only in Return for the many Benefits which in the Business of our Trade we reap from them: And the Consequence will still be very good, should we here invert St. Paul's Argument, at the xvth Chap. of his Epistle to the Romans, and the 27th Verse, and affirm, *That if we have been made Partakers of their carnal Things, and are many of us enriched by them, our Duty is also to minister unto them in spiritual Things.*

BUT we are further oblig'd to this Christian Duty on Account of the exceeding Riches of God's Grace in his Kindness towards us through Christ Jesus, (Eph. ii. 7.) by causing his Gospel to be Preach'd among us; without the Light of which, we our selves must have continu'd in the same deplorable State with these miserable People, and remain'd to this Day as ignorant and idolatrous.

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for the Propagation of the Gospel. 15

Wherefore let us remember, as the Apostle exhorts the Ephesians upon this Topick, Eph. ii. 11, 12, 13. that we also in Time passed, or before the Conversion of our Nation from the Pagan Idolatry, were Gentiles in the Flesh as well as they, and at that Time without Christ, being Aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel, and Strangers from the Covenants of the Promise, having no Hope, and without God in the World; but that now in Christ Jesus, we who sometimes were far off, or who were shut out from the Privileges of the Christian Covenant, are made nigh, or admitted to them, by the Blood of Christ. Let us, I say, so remember all this, that as we in Times past, or in the former Days of Ignorance and Darknes, did not believe God, yet have now obtain'd Mercy, and believe in him, even so these also who now believe not, may, thro' our Mercy, instructing them in the Faith which we profess, obtain Mercy; as St. Paul ex-

exhorts the *Romans*, in the *xith* Chap. 30, and 31 Verses.

OUR blessed Saviour in the *vth* of St. *Matthew* 14th Verse, calls all his Disciples and Followers, but more especially his Apostles, and their Successors, *The Light of the World; Ye are the Light of the World;* which was the same Title that, at another Time, he took upon himself, *John* viii. 12. And the Reason of his transferring this Character upon all Christians, or all his Disciples, was to convey to their Minds, under that Notion, a just Sense of the Obligation they were under, to make Use of their Light for the Instruction of their ignorant and unconverted Brethren in the Knowledge and Practice of his holy Religion; which if they fail'd to do, they would by no Means answer the Character that he had given them, nor behave themselves as *Lights of the World*, whatever their own Proficiency in the

the Knowledge of Christ and his Gospel might otherwise be.

BUT to some of these first Lights of the World, as particularly to his Apostles, he gave it in Commission, *Matth. xxviii. 19, 20.* to go abroad, and teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all Things whatsoever he had commanded them; and then he promised to be alway with them, i. e. with them and their Successors in the Ministry of the Gospel, to whom this Commission is doubtless extended, even unto the End of the World. And this Commission was so faithfully and diligently executed by those holy Men who first undertook it, and was immediately attended with such wonderful Success, that it has passed with all, who have well consider'd it, as truly miraculous.

BUT what they did not or could not do, (which we have not Time

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now to consider) though we have Reason to think they *exceeded themselves*, or their own natural Strength and Ability, in what they did; what was impossible with them, (as we may well suppose it was impossible they should Preach the Gospel to the undiscover'd Parts of the World, of which they had never heard, as impossible as it was for those of whom the Prophet speaks, to *call upon or believe in him of whom they have not heard*;) Whatever I say was impossible for them to do, and what it may be, has been in a great Measure undone again by those who have openly Apostatiz'd from the Christian Faith, or who have traduc'd or *deny'd* it by their wicked Lives, has been left as a Work to be perfected and compleated by after Generations; and, as it undoubtedly requires the Assistance of this, is therefore the laudable and just

just Occasion of our meeting together at this Time.

AND here we may observe with how much Zeal, but withal with how great a Mixture of Error, Superstition, and Idolatry, the *Romish* Missionaries have endeavoured to Propagate what they call the Catholick Faith in those Infidel Nations to which they are at any Time sent ; and let it be a Means further to *provoke* and excite us of the Reform'd Church, who have the Light of the Gospel shining among us in its purest and brightest Lustre, to be the more concern'd and industrious for the Propagation of it, wherever we go, in the same Simplicity, with which it has been convey'd and deliver'd to us ; to *have our Conversation honest among the Gentiles* ; (1 Pet. ii. 12.) and to let our Light so shine before them, that they may see our good Works, be induc'd thereby to embrace our Religion,

ligion, and, by their Conversion and Accession to CHRIST'S Kingdom here upon Earth, *Glorifie our Father which is in Heaven.* (Matth. v. 16.)

AND for our further Encouragement herein, I come next to consider,

THIRDLY, The glorious Reward which is promis'd in the Text, to those who join in the charitable Work of Converting Sinners, or *turning them to Righteousness*; and in that more especially to which we are now invited, of Converting Infidels. *They shall shine as the Brightness of the Firmament, and as the Stars for ever and ever.*

OUR Blessed Lord in the Account he gives at the xxvth Chap. of St. Matth. of his final Distribution of Rewards and Punishments at the last Day, when the Wicked shall go into everlasting Punishment, but the Righteous into Life Eternal, (ver. 46.) lays the principal Ground of the
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great Distinction he will then make between the one and the other, in the Exercise or Neglect of the Offices of Charity; and he does not overlook the meanest of them, nor those that are shown to the *least* or meanest of his Brethren; but accepts of every Token of their Kindness to them as done unto himself; *Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my Brethren, ye have done it unto me*, ver. 42. By which we see of how great a Price in the Sight of G O D all our Acts of Charity are, and how great a Return they are like to make in the other World.

As a further Evidence of our Saviour's kind Resentment of this our Benevolence, we have it recorded from his own Mouth, in *Matth. x. 42.* *that whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones, or of his Disciples, a Cup of cold Water only, in the Name of a Disciple, or as belonging to him, he shall in no wise lose*

lose his Reward; which no doubt will be answerable to the merciful Design and Intention of the Giver. But in the former Verse he likewise takes Notice of such Acts of Hospitality and Beneficence as were shown to Persons of a higher Rank, or who were more in his Favour, which are therefore the more acceptable to him, upon that Account; as those for Example, that were shown to a Prophet, or a Righteous Man, as such, or in the Name of a Prophet, or of a Righteous Man; and he there gives the same Assurance, as in the other Case, that they likewise shall not fail of a suitable Reward. *He that receiveth a Prophet in the Name of a Prophet, shall receive a Prophet's Reward, and he that receiveth a Righteous Man in the Name of a Righteous Man, shall receive a Righteous Man's Reward* ver. 41. What that Reward shall be, it is not here any further determin'd, than that it will bear an exact Pro-
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portion to the Kindness or Charity on the Account of which it is confer'd upon them, or to the Respect that is shown to our Lord by it. But from hence we may infer, that the like proportionable Returns will as certainly be made to any of the nobler Instances or Degrees of this Virtue, by which good Men distinguish themselves; such as we must grant that to be, which brings us together at this time. And it is doubtless by this Rule or Standard in judging of their pious Works, that the Prophet *Daniel* pronounces in my Text, of the wise Reformers and Instructors of the World, or of those *that turn many to Righteousness*; that as they approve themselves the greatest Friends and Benefactors to Mankind, they are therefore entitled to the greatest Rewards, and will be rais'd hereafter to the highest Felicity. *They shall shine as the*

the Brightness of the Firmament, and as the Stars for ever and ever.

AMONG this Class we need not doubt to rank all those, nor scruple to give them the first Pre-eminence, whose Labours, and Sufferings, and Deaths, are recorded either in Holy Writ, or in the Histories of the most early Times of the Church, for their Defence and Propagation of the Christian Faith; since our Saviour himself has so far condescended to our weak Capacities, in framing our Idea's of their exalted State, as to give us the best assurance we can have of it, in the Language and Metaphor before made use of by our Prophet in the Text. For having first spoken of *the End of this World*, when every one shall receive his due Reward, *Matt. xiii. 40.* then, says he in the 43 verse, *shall the Righteous*, by whom are chiefly meant the faithful Professors

fors and Publishers of his Gospel, shine forth as the Sun in the Glory of their Father, or be for ever distinguish'd with the chiefest Marks of Honour and Dignity in his glorious Kingdom. And we may likewise piously hope, that all the Workers together with them in the same Designs of Enlarging the Borders of Christ's Kingdom, and adding to the Church such as shall be sav'd, (Acts ii. 47.) when they have finish'd their Course, and have thus kept, or preserv'd, the Faith, shall then receive a Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord the Righteous Judge will be sure to give them at that Day; (2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.) and be called up to the highest or most honourable Places in those blessed Mansions, which he himself is gone before to prepare for them. To which GOD of his infinite Mercy bring us all for Jesus Christ his Sake.

To whom with the Father
and the Holy Ghost, be ascrib'd,
as is most due, all Honour and
Glory, both now and ever. *A-*
men.

F I N I S.

